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Islamic Revival and the Majority Trend of Moderation: Personal Reflections on a Half-Century of Japanese Studies

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Introduction

This article aims to provide an overview of Japanese Studies on the Islamic world and Muslim societies in the last half-century, and to contextualize them in historical, social, economic and political terms. Since these are rather personal reflections, I will not attempt to document or provide evidence as to what I have observed personally in the midst of the intellectual milieu of Japan.

The “last half-century” at this point indicates 1967–2017. One easily notices that the year of 1967 marked the very beginning of both the end of Arab nationalism and the rise of the Islamic revival. It also coincided more or less with the revival of academic studies on Islam, Muslim societies and the Middle East in Japan. One important indication, among others, was that, in 1967, the Association for Islamic Studies in Japan, established four years earlier, was officially recognized as an incorporated association under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. My being in the field for more than 45 years during this era may justify my writing this article as a personal witness.¹

Japan as a whole, since the very beginning of modernization, has been doing its best to absorb Western knowledge, while developing its own East Asian tradition. In Islam-related studies, it established itself by absorbing the Orientalist’s achievements, from both Western European and North American resources in the early modern times, and developed its own way by accessing directly to scholars and resources in Islamic countries. While it combines both Western and Islamic sources, developing a uniquely Japanese domain of academic and intellectual tradition, it has been very reluctant in reciprocating its achievements either to the West or to the Islamic world. The reason is obvious, since Japan as a mono-lingual nation has a large domestic educated population, all scholars and researchers have to respond first to the market needs of their mother-tongue speakers.

The recent urge to disseminate scientific findings in the international media, under the current globalization, has been fairly successful in various branches of natural or medical

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1 My academic involvement in various capacities may qualify me as a witness of the era, such as being one of the proposers to establish the Japan Association for Middle East Studies in 1984, and becoming later its fifth President (2003–2005), being involved in establishing the Institute of Middle Eastern Studies at the International University of Japan in 1985, initiating the department of the Study of the Islamic World in the Graduate School of Asian and African Area Studies at Kyoto University in 1998, being selected as a member (2005–2011) of 210-member Japan Council of Science, the representative body of 800,000 scientists in Japan, and subsequently being honored with the Purple Ribbon Medal by the Emperor of Japan in 2012 for my contributions to Islamic Studies and Middle East Studies in Japan.

sciences in Japan. In the fields under discussion, however, historians and researchers in other branches of humanities and social sciences have been slow to respond to globalization, since the domestic demands are still very strong in their fields.

1. The impacts of two “Oil Crises”

In the 1960’s and early 70’s, Japanese studies on Muslim societies tended to be less Islam-oriented, and more concerned with nationalism and modernization. It was high time for Asian and African countries to achieve independence or demand political liberation from colonial domination by the Western powers, and they themselves were more concerned with national and modernizing tasks. Rather than being Islamic or Muslim, they were speaking the languages of national self-determination and anti-colonialism, Asian and African solidarity or non-alignments, or the Third World alliance. There was a very strong assumption of the secularization theory, in most of the social sciences, that all societies would become more secular with modernization and Westernization, and that religions would sooner or later lose their social and political force.

The fourth Middle East War and the accompanying “oil embargo” in 1973 brought the first oil crisis to the industrialized oil-consumer countries, and Japan was hit severely. Japan’s “post-war miracle” or economic development at a startling pace, with its rewarding achievements at Tokyo Olympic Games in 1964 and Expo in Osaka in 1970, was suddenly halted by the oil crisis. Japan had to realize that its economic performance had depended on a supply of cheap oil from the Middle East. As a consequence, Japan decided to adopt a pro-Arab policy, rather displeasing to its American ally, who was in turn Israel’s ally in the Middle East.

Because of the nature of the Arab-Israeli conflict, an Arab rhetoric of the cause of the war from the Arab side and the initiation of the oil embargo by OAPEC (Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries), as well as the academic emphasis on Arab nationalism in those days, Japan received these happenings as an Arab event. They failed to realize that the “October War” was for the Arabs also the “Ramadan War” fought as Jihad by their soldiers.

In 1979, the dramatic “come-back” of Islam surprised not only Japan but most of the world when a revolution occurred in what was supposedly the strongest monarchy in the Gulf region, Iran, and it soon turned out to be an Islamic revolution under the leadership of a high ranking Islamic jurist, Ayatollah Khomeini. The initial calls for “Islamic revival” had begun, retrospectively, in the late 19th century, and after many decades of less “visible” efforts, the latest waves of revival started in the late 1960’s, only to manifest in political dimensions in the late 70’s.

As a surprise to those who wanted to see it as an exceptional event, or nationalist uprising in a religious disguise, many subsequent events proved that something odd had

started in the Middle East. To cite just a few, we may recall an armed rebellion in Makka against the Saudi Arabian regime in November 1979, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the following month, triggering a wide national struggle against the Soviet army by “Mojahideen” fighters, and the assassination of President Sadat of Egypt by Jihad Organization in October 1981 for his peacemaking with Israel.

In the 1980’s, there was confusion and chaos in the academic sphere. How should we interpret such a come-back of religion? Was Iran the exception which contradicted the general rule? Or, was Islam itself incompatible with, and inevitably rebelling against the advancing tide of modernity?

There were many sincere scholars and over-night (often self-proclaimed) specialists who proposed alternative schemes and concepts to grasp the new phenomena. Some of the proposals were sincere, but insufficient, and some of them were absurd, and create more cognitive problems, rather than solutions. One of the complications was, both in the West and in Japan, that the mass media entered the field, and started to demand feasible interpretations from specialists or to seek their own interpretations to fit the taste of their readers and viewers. For the scholars and researchers of Islam and Muslim societies, being kept in the shade until then, this was an unprecedented situation.

It seems that, in the West, two technical terms came to the fore after much confusion: “Islamic fundamentalism,” and later “political Islam.” The Japanese mass media were quick to pick up the term “Islamic fundamentalism.” This was partly due to its circulation in the Western media, and partly because of its novelty and usefulness. There was however a problem. It appeared to be a new term conjured to explain a new phenomenon for the Japanese reader and audience.

2. Japanese Proposal: Islamic Revival

It goes without saying that Islamic fundamentalism was a metaphor or a borrowing to explain something comparable. It’s being so was easy to understand in America in particular, where the term “fundamentalism” started within the protestant tradition, or in Western Christian society in general. Japanese media, lacking knowledge common to the Christians,² ignored the standard translation of (Christian) fundamentalism used in Japanese Christian circles, “konponshugi,” and created a literal translation, “genrishugi.”

As mentioned earlier, the two oil crises awakened the Japanese society to its dependence on oil and other raw materials for its industries, and to its vulnerability in the international setting. Two oil crises, combined together, indicated the importance of the Middle East as a region and Islam as a religion, or Islam as a political, economic, social and cultural force.

² Only 1 percent or so of the Japanese population is Christian. Culturally, Christian influence is stronger than this figure indicates, but not to the degree that an ordinary Japanese has heard of “fundamentalism.”

The establishment of the Japan Association for Middle East Studies in 1984 was certainly a response to such a social awareness.

In the inaugurating annual conference of the Association,³ the main panel discussion was organized on “Islam Fukko Undo,” or the “Islamic Revival Movements.” This was a Japanese alternative for Islamic fundamentalism. It was not just another way of expressing the same phenomena, but a totally different scheme to apprehend what was really going on in the Islamic world. In order to “gain an overall perspective on the Islamic revival and analyze it properly, it is important that our definition includes economic and cultural movements as well as those that pose an immediate political threat, and that we refrain from labeling hat revolves around the latter” [Kosugi 1993: 117].

In this scheme, Islam is rather broadly defined, and therefore, contemporary phenomena of the Islamic revival are broadly envisaged. Once we say “fundamentalism,” we are concerned with militancy, and our imaginations are caught by threatening elements. For one, our imagination will not be extended to Islamic banking, since this economic endeavor by business people cannot be equated with militancy or a threat. And yet it is quite legitimately part of the Islamic revival, which comprises all efforts and means to revive Islamic values in contemporary societies.

3. National Joint Projects on the Islamic World

Any article on the development of Islamic studies or Middle East Studies in Japan cannot go without mentioning the name of Professor Yuzo Itagaki (1931–). Back in the 1970’s, his intellectual activities paved the way for Japanese society to understand that the “Arab cause” was meant to apprehend the Palestine Question. In the 1980’s, he was very instrumental in establishing the Japan Association for Middle East Studies, and served as its first Secretary General, and later, as the second President. He was also instrumental in establishing the Asian Federation of Middle East Studies Associations in 1995.

In 1987, Professor Itagaki initiated a large research project on “Urbanism in Islam.” Enduring for three years, it organized many national and international conferences and published substantial publications. Prior to this, in the humanities and social sciences in Japan, large projects funded by governmental agencies had not been common, but his project pioneered such projects and became a proto-type for subsequent ones in the fields related to Islam.

Focusing on urbanism, or the urban origins of Islam and the urban civilization it created, this project clearly suggested an antithesis to obsolete images of Islam being a nomadic religion or a religion of warriors. The unique nature of the project was that it gathered nationally not only specialists on the Islamic world but also many scholars on China and the

3 In the University of Tokyo, April 1985.

West, the two poles of historical and civilizational studies in Japan. The exchanges made among them created an atmosphere of mutual recognition, since Islamic studies had not been considered as civilizational in the way that Western or Chinese studies had been treated.

The international conferences and seminars of the project invited distinguished scholars from Europe and America, as well as from the Islamic countries. They came into this closed world of Japanese scholarship, which was absorbing enthusiastically and disseminating only occasionally, and found there an expected accumulation of knowledge, sometimes in rather unique ways.

As I recall, famous scholars from Western countries were often invited, in the early days, for lectures in Tokyo. At one time, one of them happened to give a very basic lecture, appropriate for a novice audience, then in a Q&A session, he found the audience was actually a specialized one well versed in his academic works. This instance was quite indicative of the closed nature of Japanese academia.

In 1997, with a stronger awareness of the need for Islam-related studies from the government side, a much larger project was initiated under the leadership of Professor Tsugitaka Sato. It was called “Islamic Area Studies (IAS),” aiming to collect information and create a computerized information system in order to enhance understanding of the Islamic world. Its formal objectives were to “discover new approaches in Islamic Area studies through the accumulation of primary data related to Islamic civilization and Muslim contemporary issues,” “to develop a computer system suitable for multilateral Islamic Area Studies,” and “to support and encourage the formation of a new generation of scholars.”

In the first objective, the phrase to “discover new approaches” is combined with “accumulation of primary data related to Islamic civilization and Muslim contemporary issues.” This indicates a Japanese wish to create non-Orientalist alternative approach based studies of primary sources. The second objective was meant to update the academia, especially “analogue scholars,” to the digitalized internet age. The third objective was to strengthen the graduate studies in fields related to the Islamic world.

These objectives, especially the first and third, were incorporated in the newly established Graduate School of Asian and African Area Studies (ASAFAS) at Kyoto University in 1998. Founding members of its section (later, an independent department) of the Study of the Islamic World were active in the Islamic Area Studies Project.

Collecting primary sources was considered pivotal to the IAS Project, and ASAFAS took a lead in this respect. Within five years of its inception, it had created the largest Arabic collection in Japan. And later the second largest Urdu collection in the world was acquired and, by 2016, its cataloguing was complete.

The IAS Project came to a close in March 2002. Its achievements were well received, but on the other hand, one serious flaw was recognized. As a research project, it was not

designed to build an institution. When it came to an end, networks constructed during the project became malfunctioning. Against this backdrop, a new Islamic Area Studies project was inaugurated in 2006, supported by Japan's National Institutes for Humanities (NIHU). This time, it aimed at establishing five research centers of Islamic Area Studies in four universities and one Oriental library.

One of them, the Center for Islamic Area Studies at Kyoto University, known as KIAS, was attached to ASAFAS, and therefore connected with the graduate studies in a direct manner. After ten years of expanding activities, KIAS entered into a new cooperation with NIHU in 2016, when a new research project of "Modern Middle East Studies" began. The phase of institution building was judged to be complete, as a national network of research institutions and scholars is fully operational.

4. The Main Stream in the Islamic World?

Throughout these years, the present author has been engaged, with various colleagues, to survey and clarify the nature of the contemporary Islamic world and its "main stream," if there is one.

The concept of Islamic revival suggests that the revival is not meant as that of Islam, since Islam is a name of a mass of both the abstract and the real, but rather that of the Umma. Then, we must ask ourselves if the Umma, as a universal / international /cross-border community of Muslims, is an abstract idea or a reality in the international society. The answer must be both affirmative and negative at the same time, since the Umma as an Islamic ideal may stay abstract if there are not practical activities to transform the ideal to a reality. The establishment and continuation of OIC (Organization of Islamic Conference; Organization of Islamic Cooperation since 2011), for example, indicates both the ideal of Umma on which this international organization is firmly based on one hand, and the frustrating reality of the political fragmentation of the Umma on the other.

The very idea of the leaders of the Umma discussing its crucial issues was addressed in a work of 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Kawākibī, *Umm al-Qurā*, or Makkan Conference, as I prefer to render it, in 1900. He was one of the Manarists, or the loose group of intellectuals whose major mouthpiece was the journal *Al-Manār* [Kosugi 2006: 6–11]. Its leader, Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā continued to publish this journal from 1898 to 1935, and dedicated his life to disseminating the ideas of his two mentors, al-Afghānī and 'Abduh. *Al-Manār* was circulated from Java in the East to Morocco in the West, publishing ideas and news from various parts of the Umma, or actually transforming the ideal Umma into a practical theater of Islamic reform through this print medium.

One may argue that the fact of OIC members being the sovereign members of the United Nations betrays the ideal of the single Umma, and serves as a cover-up to conceal the actual

acceptance of the concept of “nation-state,” alien to Islam, by today’s Muslims. However, both the Islamic solidarity and the intervention by the name of Islam among the Muslim countries strongly suggest that there is a dimension of Umma polity between the external and the internal in the conventional sense of international relations.

Al-Kawākibī proposed to make an Arab *khalīfa* (caliph) the head of a federation of Muslim countries to preserve the unity of the Umma. Rashīd Riḍā proposed to revive an Islamic caliphate as he envisioned in the last days of the Ottoman caliphate, serialized in *Al-Manār* in 1922–23. This journal, *Al-Manār*, or the “lighthouse,” was sending light, so to speak, into the stormy dark sea in those days, since Islamic reformers were disparately struggling against the forceful tides of modern ideas flowing from the Western sources.

In the words of Rashīd Riḍā, they posed themselves as the “moderate reformist party” between the conservative Islamic traditionalists on the one side and the Westernizers (*mutafarnijūn*) on the other. Although they tried to take a centrist position, Islamic trends as a whole were increasingly marginalized within the ideological spectrum of the day. Nationalism, liberalism and socialism were rising.

Malcolm Kerr stated in his work on Islamic reform in the middle of the 1960’s, “Rather than Islamic loyalties assimilating nationalism and secular institutions, it would be more to the point to say that the latter have assimilated Islam.” [Kerr 1966: 221]

It was only after the defeat of the Arab front against Israel in 1967 and the subsequent decline of secular Arab nationalism, that what was in the underground flow of Islamic revival started to manifest on the surface. The Islamic revival brought Islam back to the main stream of social life and political ideas, but it was not strong enough to wipe the other tides out. So, the Islamic world has been in a divided state with three major forces stretching it in different directions. These three major forces are modernization / Westernization, nationalism and Islamic revival. This state of affairs continues to this day.

Within the Islamic revival, do we observe “mainstreaming” or “fragmentation”? As far as the ideas, or the sets of Islamic ideals, are concerned, the “revival” actually involves three different elements: First, renewal and reform of Islamic understanding and its practices, second, adaptation and Islamization of the modern or the Western, and, third, revitalization of the traditional.

To cite a few examples: The so-called “trio” of Islamic reform [Hourani 1983], namely, al-Afghānī, ‘Abduh and Riḍā (roughly from the 1870’s to the 1930’s), represents the first, with a strong favor of the second. The clearest example of the second is Islamic finance and banking from the 1970’s onward. Reinstitution of the ulama organizations or revival of Sufi orders can be seen as the third. These three transform themselves in time and they often merge in one way or another. For example, the ulama retained their social function after the 1960’s, partly because of the Islamic revival at the popular plain which brought a new market for

Islamic discourses, but their “traditional” discourses were very close to that of the reformers in the early 20th century. Sufi orders for their part had become more Sharia compliant by this time, less traditional compared with what they were a half century earlier.

Despite differences among them, they constitute all together the revived Islamic trend within a Muslim society, as a rival to more secular trends. My hypothesis was, and is, as it still needs further verification, that these were in the process of forming a majority, and there would be a majority trend of moderation sooner or later, perhaps within a century. Why and how should we hold such a hypothesis?

5. The Umma’s market mechanism of ideas

Works of the present author as a student of Islamic studies involve the first three centuries of Islam, while as a student of political science I have been engaged with Middle Eastern / Islamic politics in the 19th to 21st centuries. What binds the two eras is the history of Islamic thought, stretching from *Kitāb al-Kharāj* by Abū Yūsuf⁴ in the 8th century to the contemporary Islamic leaders.

Two issues attracted me especially, namely, the historical developments of *tafsīr* (Quranic exegesis)⁵ and the rise, competition and final formation of schools of law (*madhāhib*).⁶ From the historical observation, a hypothetical scheme came out. It is what I call the Umma’s market mechanism of ideas. This scheme is also an answer to a long standing question of why Islam lacks the clergy and the church organization.

When we make comparisons among the three major “world religions,” namely, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam, a startling difference stands out between the first two and the last one: Separation of the clergy and the lay members, or the dualism of the sacred and the profane, and the hierarchical order and authority of the clergy organization (temple / church), and a total lack of these in Islam.

We usually resort to saying that, although there isn’t a clergy hierarchy in the exact sense, there are the ulama, the learned, especially the fuqaha (jurists; singular is faqih), who more or less function as an equivalent to the clergy. This answer apparently misses the most important question, “who makes them such dignitaries?” A church or a temple organization has a central authority who at the top of their hierarchy appoint the rest of functionaries in the organization. There are also ecumenical councils which decide what is orthodox and what is not. In Islam, the ulama started as private individuals, and earned later the trust and

4 Its preface, addressed to Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd, was the first written document of political thought in the precise sense. See [Ibīsh and Kosugi 2005].

5 I have discussed the historical and typological classification of classical, modern and contemporary *tafsīrs* in [Kosugi 1994b].

6 I have elaborated the question of why and how these schools rose, competed with some becoming triumphant, while others lost the competition and became un-used in [Kosugi 2011:304–324].

recognition of society through their socio-religious contributions. For an example, Abū Ḥanīfa, the founding father of the Ḥanafī school of law, the largest of the all Islamic legal schools today, numerically speaking, was a silk merchant. He was sustaining his livelihood and that of his pupils through his trade.

Did the caliphs as the politico-religious leaders of the Umma have that kind of central authority, when they held a real political power in the first few centuries? Yes, but not ultimately. Students of Islamic history are familiar with what happened with the Miḥna (trial). Abbasid caliph Ma'mūn adopted the rationalist Mu'tazilite theology, especially the doctrine of the creation of the Qur'an, as an official one in 833, and tried to suppress those who disagreed with his policy. This process of prosecution, or miḥna, continued for around fifteen years under three Abbasid caliphs. Ibn Ḥanbal, the founding father of the Ḥanbalī school of law, resisted this policy and was severely suppressed for doing so. However, his staunch stand earned popular support and made his position triumphant, leading to the Abbasid decision to adopt the creed which the populace had accepted and followed.

At the same time, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī departed the Mu'tazilite school and became its staunchest critic, supporting the cause of Ibn Ḥanbal. Although there was a substantial difference between these two scholars, both the Asha'arī school of theology and the Ḥanbalī school of law later became an integral part of what we know as the Sunnis, or the absolute majority of Muslims (90% or so today).

It seems apparent from these events that the Umma itself, not the caliph as the formal head of the Umma, had the ultimate authority in Islamic affairs. However, the Umma did not, and does not, have a formal decision making body. How can we know its decision?

Certainly, Islam is not democracy, especially in matters related to creed and law. Even today, votes and polls have no place in Islamic creed and law. So, the hypothetical scheme is a "market mechanism." Of course, this is a metaphor, and you may suspect the naming comes from the popularity of market mechanism in the post-Cold War era. It stems rather from the mercantile nature of Makkān society at the very birth of Islam. The Qur'an speaks of the benefits of faith (īmān) in trade terms, for example, "O ye who believe! Shall I show you a commerce that will save you from a painful doom? Ye should believe in Allah and His messenger, and should strive for the cause of Allah with your wealth and your lives. That is better for you, if ye did but know" [al-Qur'an 61:10, Chapter of the Ranks, Verse 10–11, English translation by Marmaduke Pickthall]. Islamic economies were historically market-oriented, though not capitalist, and this metaphor must be more appropriate to Islam than to others.

In this market of Umma, the political and intellectual leaders offer their ideas and interpretations, and test their "products" through the acceptance of the populace, or al-sawād al-a'zam (the great majority, the mass), of the Umma. In the market, the Muslims show their

preference through adoption and attachment to the ideas they are convinced of, as consumers would show their preference by purchase.

A quick note: A “market” meant here is a real one in our society, not an ideal type in economics where the law of demand and supply produces equilibrium through price mechanism. In our society, a market has other interventions, such as governmental subsidies or consumers’ oral advertising for their favorite commodities, among others.

In early centuries, we have observed a rather quick rise and fall of schools of law, such as the Jarīrī School⁷ and the Awzā’ī School,⁸ as well as the prosperity and final decline of the Zāhirī school of law. From the 1950’s onward, the Islamic revival was accompanied by what I call “Fiqh Renaissance,”⁹ and many classical works of Islamic law were brought back in new forms. Legal encyclopedias are one of such forms. An Egyptian encyclopedia¹⁰ combines eight authentic schools of law, namely, the five Sunni schools of Ḥanafī, Mālikī, Shāfī’ī, Ḥanbalī and Zāhirī (now malfunctioning but fully documented), the two Shiite schools of Ja’farī and Zaydī schools,¹¹ and the Ibādī school (a moderate Kharijite school). Works of earlier schools and scholars were compiled by the great efforts of Qal’ajī.¹²

The same scheme of market mechanism explains why and how certain Quranic exegeses succeeded in gaining popular acceptance and endure to this day, while some others were accepted only to a limited extent, if not rejected as irrelevant and unconvincing.

By the 16–17th centuries, the Islamic market of ideas reached a state of monopoly or oligopoly, and the market became very stable. Today’s confessional map of the Islamic world stems from this era. Religious stability should be positively appreciated when a society and a polity are stable. With the advent of the Western powers, this stability was negatively dubbed as “stagnation,” or even “backwardness.” In market scheme terms, we may say that the market became unstable due to fierce competition from newer products. This time, however, the products were not just Islamic ideas. Many modern ideas, alien to Islam, flew into this market.

7 Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī is recognized as the greatest early scholar of Qur’anic exegesis and history, but his legal standing lost the competition. His school is known either as the Jarīrī School or the Ṭabarī School.

8 Al-Awzā’ī was born in Baalbak in present-day Lebanon, and his school is also characterized as Syrian School. Its influence was extended westward under the Umayyad dynasty, and the judges belonging to this school officiated in Syria until 811/812, and in Andalus until 950/951. It was finally overshadowed by the Mālikī School [Kosugi 2011: 305–309].

9 In the sense that Renaissance in the West brought back classical literatures.

10 It has reached the 33rd volume, a half century after launching the first one, yet this is just one tenth or so of the projected whole. Meanwhile, a Kuwaiti encyclopedia with 45 volumes has been circulated and appreciated.

11 Ja’farī and Zaydī schools of law represent respectively Ithnā ‘Asharī School and Zaydī School in terms of creed. The former is today’s main stream Shiism and forms majority in Iran, Iraq and Lebanon. The latter dominates Northern Yemen.

12 Muḥammad Rawwās al-Qal’ajī compiled encyclopedic volumes on legal opinions of the notable first generations, such as Abū Hurayra, ‘Ā’isha, ‘Alī, al-Awzā’ī, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Ibn Mas’ūd, Ibrahīm al-Nakh’ī, al-Layth ibn Sa’d, Sufyān al-Thawrī, al-Ṭabarī, ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, and Uthmān ibn ‘Affān.

From our past experiences of the Umma's market mechanism, one may draw a few conventional wisdoms. This market tends to bring forth a majority and to reduce differences. A thousand years ago, there were numerous schools and sects, as recorded in *Milal wa Nihal* (religions and sects) literatures. With the passing of time, they were substantially reduced in number, while differences were reduced mostly to a mutually tolerable degree. The problem of sectarianism in the Middle East today is apparently connected to the vitality of religious conviction, socio-economic benefits of religious / sectarian affiliation, and subsequent political violence. It does not, however, indicate sectarian fragmentation. The tendency is to hammer out more uniformity rather than splitting out. This is in very sharp comparison with an ever increasing number of Christian or Buddhist denominations.

This tendency of majority formation is also accompanied by "consensus making," when possible. However, since it has no formal institution to decide, it takes time to determine what the market, or the Umma, has chosen. It can be a half century before a final consensus is made, not a decade or two. With modern technologies of communication, adding more recent ascending ICT technologies, communication seems easier, but this ease may create more arguments and conflicts.

There is an issue of who are the producers of the ideas. In pre-modern eras, they were invariably ulama in the traditional sense. In the mass societies of the 20th century, teachers, social activists, scientist-turned Islamic leaders and other intellectuals, who received secular, not traditional Islamic, training entered the market. Universal education also brought a new generation of the literate, both self-taught Islamists and secularists.

6. The State of Affairs in the Current Market of Islamic Ideas

We can see a fluctuating market of Islamic ideas in various fields. One important domain is, without doubt, politics. What is an Islamic government in contemporary conditions? At the demise of the Ottoman caliphate, Rashīd Riḍā argued to restore a truly Islamic caliphate. The Islamic Liberation Party, active to this day since its establishment in 1953, has been advocating the Muslim duty to reestablish the caliphate. A violent armed organization, the so-called Islamic State, declared a new caliphate in parts of war-torn Syria and Iraq in 2015. The majority of ulama, however, do not subscribe to the view that Muslims should cling to the ideal of caliphate.

Either Islamic polity should be a monarchy or a republic, depending on who is arguing. Traditional support for monarchical polity has been lost in most of the Muslim countries, but is still vivid in the remaining monarchies. The Islamic revolution of Iran brought a radical Shiite version of Islamic republicanism. Two other Islamic republics are Sunni,¹³ and have quite different temperaments. "Is it legitimate to have a Muslim nation-state?" is also a valid

¹³ Mauritania and Pakistan.

question. All in all, a consensus in the political domain is far from being achieved. However, there has developed a consensus, in the last four decades or so, that any Islamic government must enforce Sharia in one form or another.

In the domain of economics, one of the most important questions was “is bank interest a prohibited *riba*?” The legal arguments started when post office saving and conventional (Western) banking entered the Islamic world in the late 19th century. Even after the establishment of Islamic banks in the 70’s and 80’s, the question continued to dominate the legal debate on Islamic economics. Since the 1990’s, the triumph of those who maintained that all bank interests are *riba* has become apparent, while Islamic financial institutions hold their customers firmly.

In other aspects of Islamic finance, many issues are under debate. Since Islamic finance is based on the Islamization of modern financial products, the legality of some of these new products must be challenged. Furthermore, in the wider scope of Islamic economics, which should encompass all economic domains of Muslim life, there many untouched domains, awaiting academic attention.¹⁴

Islamic medical ethics has a practical dimension, since medical doctors equipped with modern medicine await Islamic answers to validate their newly acquired technologies for Muslim patients. Organ transplantation is such an issue. There were many negative, or skeptical, legal opinions until the 1980’s, but a consensus was established in recent decades that the principle of life maintenance can override other secondary considerations, and that they can employ the methods of organ transplantation as long as it does not endanger the life of donor.¹⁵

Surveying these domains and their issues informs us, first, that the Islamic market of ideas and legal opinions is largely fluctuating, though majority formation is functioning in some domains. This may prove the hypothetical scheme of market mechanism is working, though it is too early to forecast what consensus can be seen at the middle of the 21st century. Second, the entire globe, or mankind as a whole, lives in a fluctuating world, with the uncertainty

14 To cite some, the traditional domains of Islamic economies, some of which are often vividly practiced even today, include 1) *zakāt* and *ṣadaqa*, 2) inheritance, 3) social welfare based on *takāful*, 4) *waqf*, 5) *Qarḍ Ḥasan*, and 6) Mosque-based community activities. New domains and their achievements in recent decades include 7) Islamic finance, 8) Islamic banking, 9) Islamic insurance, 10) Islamic investment, 11) *zakāt* of Islamic financial industry, 12) contemporary financial instruments, such as *muḍāraba*, *mushāraka*, *murābaḥa*, *ijāra*, *shukūk* and the like, 13) Sharia compliance, 14) standardization of Islamic financial products, and 15) Islamic version of corporate social responsibility. Emerging domains and tasks ahead include 16) Islamic hotels and tourism, 17) *ḥalāl* food industries, 18) marriage fund, 19) Islamic microfinance, 19) redefinition of poverty and institutional remedy for the socially deprived, 20) cottage industries, 21) Islamic agricultural development, and 22) ecologically sustainable development based on Islamic visions. This list is a modified version of one in [Kosugi 2014].

15 In case of transplantation from the diseased, the dignity of the corpse was overridden. Before the establishment of the medical viability of transplantation, putting a scalpel into the corpse could not be justified for the sake of the noble cause of life preservation.

of globalization, rapid technological developments, and the “clash of civilizations,” if we accept this term. Islamic legal opinions must fluctuate if the target realities of the world are fluctuating.

7. Political Islam and the Post 9.11 Era

Japanese academia, by the end of the 20th century, largely accepted “Islamic revival,” “Islamic revival movements” and “Islamic area studies” as specialist terminology, while “Islamism” was also recognized in political studies. “Islamic fundamentalism” was still popular among the Japanese mass media.

The 9.11 event changed the landscape. The attacks were branded in terms of “terror,” and “war on terror” was declared by the George Bush (Jr.) Administration. “Fundamentalist” was replaced with “terrorist.” In the Western academia, “political Islam” was employed as a more objective term, and this survived the 9.11 era. Rather, with the spread of radical and extremist groups of political Islam, it become more relevant as an analytical term.

Political Islam is, from the perspective of the present author, a political dimension of the Islamic revival, and therefore, a valid concept. “Islamism,” as a contemporary political ideology in Islam, and “Islamic politics” as politics where legitimization and politicization were based on an interplay of Islamic terms, are also valid and useful concepts. However, there are two inherent problems, when seen from the studies of Islamic revival.

The first is its concentration on the political, and the dislocation of politics from the rest of the Islamic revival. For example, Islamic economics is completely out of focus, when one speaks political Islam. Zakāt, or almsgiving and social welfare based on it, is an integral part of Islamic economics, and this works to help the needy and the poor with an Islamic sense of solidarity, and therefore serves very well to counterbalance the radicalizing elements for which poverty provides a hotbed.

The second is the sense of “threat.” Concentration on politics stems largely from Western concerns, even only implicitly, with political and security threats the Islamic world may pose against the Western countries. Peaceful struggles for “bread and salt” in the daily life of Muslims, based on Islamic values, do not seem to be what the specialists of political Islam are troubled by.

On the other hand, the concept of Islamic revival concerns itself very much with daily life of Muslims, since one important issue to apprehend is why and how Muslims decided to “return” to religious values to survive in this modern world. Area Studies, by definition, aims at understanding the target society and the people living in it. Revolutions, wars, civil strife, assassinations and other political events, may attract students of Area Studies. But more importantly, though it is often more difficult, we should look at what is unspoken, because here we find what is taken for granted as the postulates of a given society, that is too apparent

and too common for the people to refer to. In politics, we should seek to sense what is in their hearts, not only out spoken words and political discourses.

When we talk about democracy or democratization in the Arab countries, we may talk more about the lack of it, since there are not many manifestations of democracy, if judged by the political standards of developed countries. When we listen to what people feel inwardly, however, we notice that they sense the tyranny of men in power and they wish their own voices to be heard. They clearly demand what is “democratic” for them, if not democracy in the strict sense of the word. The Islamic ideal of justice may be pronounced by the ulama, and even by the tyrants for the sake of their legitimization. Do the people distrust the Islamic justice? Not necessarily, because they firmly confirm their acute sense of being oppressed through the Islamic concept of *zulm* (oppression, injustice), mirroring the concept of justice.

Based on observations through my own fieldworks, survey of the literature as well as the informed opinions of my colleagues, there are at least five major manifestations of Islamic revival. They are wide spread in the following descending order: 1) Building mosques and promoting daily prayers; 2) Collecting obligatory and voluntary alms (*zakāt* and *ṣadaqa*) and developing social welfare and mutual support; 3) Preparing and going to pilgrimage (*ḥajj*) to the sacred land; 4) Flourishing of Islamic financial institutions; and 5) Islamic activities in constitutional, legal and political domains. The last one sometimes involves radical and extremist elements. Attention by the mass media as well as academic specialists is in ascending order from the bottom.

In a nutshell, a grass-roots Islamic revival spreads worldwide, and then, its economic and political manifestation in non-violent forms becomes more prevalent, while some political organizations adopt radical, and sometimes violent, ways to change their societies. Grass-root practices of Islamic revival are certainly discernible for those who live in the given society, but often ignored by observers.

We certainly need to pay attention not only to the major trends and the moderates, but also to radical and extremist groups. The radicals are numerically a minority but they may possess the means to disturb the majority formation, by representing the frustrated and disparate elements of a society. Again, even for that sake, we need to locate the radicals in the entire spectrum of the Islamic revival, so that we can grasp both the moderate and the radical.

Concluding remarks

All researchers serve their societies first, and then the global society. It goes without saying that Japanese studies related to Muslim societies have been operating within the context of Japan and the international context in which Japan is situated. Since Japan lost colonial domination totally at the end of World War II, it chose to be a “peaceful trading nation” and sought to be friendly with most countries, if not all, including Islamic ones. This was

counterbalanced by primacy of cooperation with the developed countries, and other political and economic considerations, as with the case of “oil crises” discussed in this article.

The objectivity of any researcher in the scientific sense and his/her social responsibility within the context of his/her professional academic endeavors must be always considered. It is also imperative today to consider the responsibility of a researcher in the global context, since we are all contributing to the accumulated common knowledge of mankind, which should serve the common good of mankind as a whole, or the common good of the global society comprising both humans and the earth. It is my firm conviction that Japanese academic approaches to the Islamic world and to Muslim societies, as described in this article, are non-hegemonic, seeking a middle ground for peaceful co-existence, or to use our new terminology, for a sustainable humanosphere,¹⁶ and can contribute to an appropriate understanding suitable for the 21st century.

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¹⁶ “Sustainable humanosphere” is a new concept proposed by a large research project at Kyoto University (2007–2012). It aims to have a deep understanding of the humanosphere, or the human sphere of existence, combined with the geosphere and the biosphere, so that we can have a better solution to envision sustainability and survivability of the human as a specie and as individuals. It also proposed “Sustainable Humanosphere Index,” to supersede or supplement the Human Development Index.

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